AIR WAR COLLEGE

RESEARCH REPORT

WAR IN THE FALKLANDS: PERSPECTIVES ON BRITISH STRATEGY AND USE OF AIR POWER

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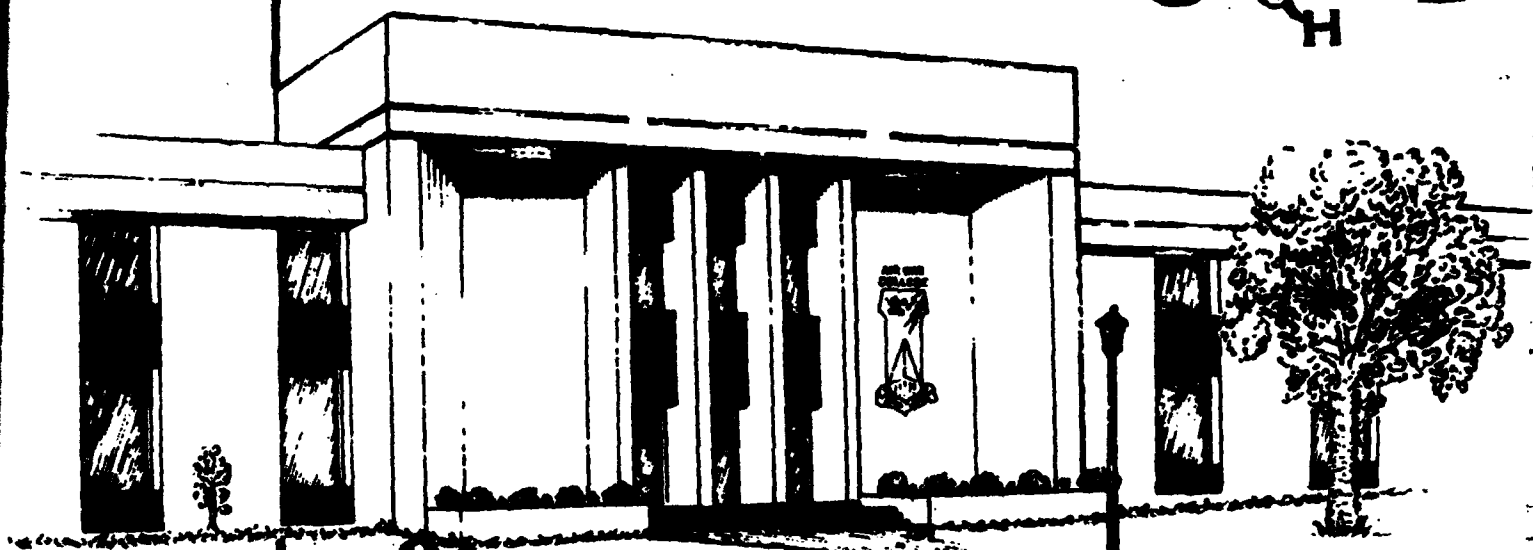

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WAR IN THE FALKLANDS: PERSPECTIVES ON BRITISH STRATEGY AND USE OF AIR POWER

by

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: War in the Falklands; Perspectives on British Strategy and Use of Air Power

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Examines the political atmosphere and events leading to the Falklands war and concludes that the war was caused by critical misperceptions on both sides. Analyzes British response with emphasis on force selection, strategy, "Jointness," and the role of airpower. Suggests that British victory hinged on a well-coordinated, joint warfighting effort, and highlights the key role played by airpower. Concludes with a caution concerning the potential for worldwide perceptions of reduced US power projection capabilities in light of budget-induced force reductions. Warns that these perceptions could lead, as they did in the Falklands, to military conflict.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel John E. Marr (B.A., St. Michael's College; M.A., University of Northern Colorado), is a command pilot with extensive experience in operations, including duty as an F-111 squadron commander. He has accumulated over 4,300 hours of flying while assigned in the CONUS and in Europe. He held staff positions as a briefing officer at HQ United States Air Forces Europe and as an operational planner at both HQ Tactical Air Command and HQ United States Central Command. Colonel Marr is a 1988 graduate of the Air War College.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A case can be made that the United States caused the Falklands War--not by its actions in 1982, but rather in 1831! (20:5) In that year the Falklands were under the jurisdiction of Argentina, and had been since 1820, Argentina having laid claim to the Islands in that year. An Argentianian governor had been overseeing the islands, albeit with limited effect, since 1823. But in 1831, the Governor arrested the crew of a US ship for hunting seals on a scale that exceeded the limits he had imposed to protect the declining seal population. The American's property was confiscated and held on the islands, and the crew taken to Buenos Aires for trial. However, the American consul in Buenos Aires, at the prompting of the British consul, dispatched the USS Lexington, a warship that was coincidentally docked in Buenos Aires, to the islands to secure the confiscated American property. (20:5) Unfortunately for Argentina, the captain of the Lexington "not only recovered the confiscated sealskins, but also spiked the Argentine guns, blew up their powder, sacked the settlement buildings, and arrested most of the inhabitants. He then declared the island 'free of all government' and sailed away." (20:5)

Argentina attempted to restore order to the islands but was not successful. Taking advantage of the existing

turmoil, Britain dispatched two warships to the islands in January 1833. The British easily subdued the limited Argentine force and declared the islands to be under the rule of Britain. Despite Argentine protests regarding the legality of this claim, Britain maintained control over the islands until April 2, 1982. On that day, Argentine troops invaded the islands and, after a brief but fiercely contested resistance by dramatically outnumbered British marines, the blue and white flag of Argentina was again raised over the islands. Surely the Argentines could not then have imagined that in just 74 days they would be expelled from the islands, much as they had been in 1833.

The term desolation is somehow inadequate in describing the Falkland Islands. An entry in the log of a Spanish ship in 1540 described what is believed to have been the Falklands: "All this country is bare without a bit of wood, very windy, and very cold, because eight months in the year it snows and the prevailing winds are southwest." (20:1) In the absence of any other resources, early interest in the islands appear to have revolved around whaling and sealing. Although first visited by Englishman John Strong in 1690, the first settlement was established by the French in 1764. Two years later the English built a colony, unaware of the existence of the French colony. The French later sold their settlement to Spain and administrative responsibilities were handed over to Spanish

authorities in Buenos Aires. In 1770, ships of the Spanish fleet sailed to the islands and ousted the British. A subsequent agreement allowed the British to restore their settlement as a face-saving gesture. But, in an alleged unwritten agreement, the British agreed to voluntarily withdraw at a later time. (35:13) The British finally departed the islands in 1774 but not without leaving behind a marker which claimed British sovereignty over the islands. The Spanish abandoned the islands themselves in 1806 because of the wars of independence in Latin America. They did not, however, foresake their claim to sovereignty. After Argentine independence was acknowledged by Spain in 1823, Buenos Aires assumed Spain's claim to the islands and appointed a governor. This situation prevailed until the encounter with the Americans in 1831.

This historical background is necessary to understand the dispute between Britain and Argentina over the question of sovereignty, which has festered since 1833. The remainder of this report will focus on the 1982 conflict. Chapter II examines the political atmosphere and events leading up to the Argentine invasion. Chapter III analyzes the British military response in terms of force selection and British assessment of the capabilities of both its own force and that of Argentina. Chapter IV assesses the British strategy. Particular attention is placed on the "jointness" of the British military effort and the

contributing role played by airpower. Chapter V draws on the British experience and suggests the implications for the power projection capabilities of the United States. Appendices include a chronology of significant events in the war, British and Argentine Air Orders of Battle (AOB), and British and Argentine aircraft losses.

In the end I wish to show that the cause of the war was political misperceptions; that the British victory hinged on a well-coordinated, joint warfighting effort; and that air power played a key role in the outcome.

CHAPTER II

WAR AS AN EXTENSION OF POLITICS

The Falklands conflict illustrates as well as any in the past few decades that war is, as Clausewitz says, ". . . a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means." (7:87) To understand the Falklands war you must have an appreciation of the climate which lead to the shift from diplomatic to violent means in resolving this political conflict. To gain this appreciation, the policies of both nations have to be examined in their domestic and international contexts. In the end, it will be clear that the war was not inevitable, but was caused largely by mutual misconceptions and miscalculations regarding each other's intentions and capabilities. (37:52; 22:100; 24:9)

Britain's Decline as a Global Power

Great Britain's role as a world power changed dramatically after World War II. A new bipolar world order emerged, led by the United States and the Soviet Union. Although England was victorious in the war, its economy was severely ravaged and it was no longer in a position to maintain its previous role as a leading world power. (16:62) In spite of this, Britain still attempted to maintain the commitments of its global empire. This was complicated by its new responsibility to provide occupation forces on the

Continent. (16:62) Slowly, and with great pain, Britain came to realize and accept the decline of the empire. (16:63)

British foreign and defense policies began a shift which refocused on the defense of Europe, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and a reliance on nuclear weapons as a deterrent force. (16:65) At the same time, Britain began the unpleasant process of untying itself from its colonial commitments, best demonstrated by its withdrawal from "East of Suez." (16:65) Britain's ability to maintain colonial influence was exacerbated by its slow economic recovery, driven in part by its inability to gain membership in the European Community until 1970. (16:65) Throughout the 1970s, the British continued to concentrate on their NATO commitments, which emphasized defense in the East and North Atlantic, defense of England itself, maintaining the British Army on the Rhine (BOAR), providing its own nuclear capabilities, and basing for US nuclear assets. (16:66) The manner in which Britain transitioned from its global and colonial role was less than graceful and far from efficient. One expert comments:

> The disorganized retreat from a global role, made grudgingly and in a protracted way, has taxed the British economy and limited Britain's alternatives to the use of force . . . What is indeed a constant of British defense and foreign policies is that, since 1945, British governments have emitted contradictory signals by maintaining foreign policies not in line with Britain's military capabilities . . .

> . . . Britain's readjustment regarding its empire position is motivated mostly by a lack of resources. Constant economic crisis is reflected in the reduction of the defense effort. (16:67)

There is no better example of this than the decisions of the British government in 1980-81. Anxious to upgrade its nuclear capabilities, the Thatcher government was successful in reaching an agreement with Washington allowing British acquisition of the Trident system. While this was considered a major victory by Britain, tough economic conditions at home forced significant cuts in those other aspects of the military deemed less directly related to specific NATO roles or homeland defense. (16:66) The nature and extent of these cuts were detailed in a June 1981 Defense White Paper.

The Royal Navy (RN) was targeted to assume the bulk of the cuts. In view of the new emphasis placed on Trident and on antisubmarine warfare (ASW) missions for NATO defense, the surface fleet became the obvious candidate for reductions. Despite intense lobbying by interests for the Royal Navy (and all the traditions it represented), the government stood firm. First to go would be the aircraft carriers which were, in fact, performing primarily in an ASW role in the North Atlantic. The government argued that carriers were too vulnerable and that the ASW job could be done just as well, if not better, by attack submarines. (16:69) The agreement to sell the small carrier HMS

Invincible to Australia followed the disposal of Britain's only two large carriers, the Eagle and Ark Royal. (16:69; 2:1264) Britain also intended to dispose of its only two amphibious assault ships, the Fearless and Intrepid. (2:1264) Additionally, they had already announced the withdrawal, without replacement, of the HMS Endurance--the only surface vessel on station in the South Atlantic. (2:1264)

The cuts programmed for the Navy represented Britain's prioritization of defense needs in light of tightly constrained budgets. The decisions provided for defense against the Soviet threat to NATO at the expense of long-range power projection capabilities (and thus reduced capability to protect distant colonial interests). Some critics decried putting all the defense eggs in one basket:

> Nor should the magnitude of the gravest danger divert attention from lesser and more likely threats. This happened over the Falklands, most obviously in the progressive reduction of the Navy to an anti-submarine force for that improbable single scenario: The defense of seaborne reinforcement and resupply for the central front against Soviet naval attack. (6:36)

That cuts had to be made for economic reasons was quite clear, but the message those cuts transmitted was equally clear: ". . . Britain was in no state of mind or material to fight a maritime defensive action overseas, let alone wage a full-scale war as far away as the South Atlantic...." (2:1264) The reductions were to begin immediately and to be completed by the end of 1982.

Argentina's Long-Standing Grievance

While Great Britain was occupied with the traumatic changes associated with their decline as a world power, Argentina was dealing with the world from its limited perspective as a Third World nation. It was more concerned with border disputes, internal security, and the economy. In this light it is easy to understand that the recovery of the Malvinas Islands (the Argentine name for the Falklands) was always a prime interest of successive Argentine governments: "The Argentine claims had remained the same over a long span of time and were always a matter of high priority in Argentina's foreign policy." (16:87) For Britain, on the other hand, given its preoccupations and broader global concerns, the Falkland question rarely drew any interest. In fact, Lord Carrington is said to have admitted that the Falklands ranked number 242 on the foreign office priority list. (16:78) That the two nations judged the criticality of the issue from vastly separated points of view is understandable. For industrialized nations ". . .traditional conflicts are not taken seriously as threats to the status quo, they remain largely ignored." (16:86) On the contrary, "Any Third World nation that inherits a traditional conflict with an industrialized country tends to award the issue the relative importance of the adversary, rather than the intrinsic importance of the dispute." (16:86) It is in this

context that the Argentinians revived their quest to recover the Islands in 1964.

From Argentina's point of view the British signaled their distancing from the Falklands in 1964 when they placed the islands on the United Nations (UN) decolonization list. (16:88) While welcoming this distancing the Argentinians feared that decolonization could result in independence, a move they believed inappropriate since, in their view, Argentina maintained sovereignty over the islands. (16:88) Thus, Argentina took its case against decolonization to the UN, pleading instead for agreement to bilateral negotiations on the sovereignty issue.

Argentina's move succeeded and produced, in 1965, General Assembly Resolution 2065. In a key phrase, the resolution asked both countries to negotiate the issue while taking into account the "interests," as opposed to the "wishes," of the island's inhabitants. (16:88) This wording in essence, removed any say on the part of the islanders on the outcome of negotiations. By abstaining rather than voting "no", Britain signaled at least a tacit approval of the arrangement. (16:88) The negotiations which followed will be discussed later in this chapter. For now, suffice it to say that the talks showed promise of success on several occasions only to be repeatedly dashed by domestic developments in Britain. As time progressed, negotiation mechanisms broke down, resulting in stalemate and frustration.

Like many other Latin American nations, Argentina's government at any given time was the product of military coups. This was true in 1976 when a military junta replaced the Peron government. The new government faced two major problems--internal terrorism and a reeling economy. These two areas became the top priorities of the Junta. The terrorism problem was countered by the Junta's "National Reorganization Process" which drew sharp criticisms from worldwide human rights organizations for its harsh measures. (16:75) It also resulted in economic sanctions being levied by the US and others. In spite of the methods, internal stability was established by 1980 leading to a relaxation of the harsh measures and eventual lifting (in 1981) of sanctions by the US. On the economic front, the government initially made good progress only to relapse in 1979 as inflation and unemployment both began to rise sharply and the national debt grew. (16:75-76)

Diplomatically, conditions were improving for Argentina in 1980. Their border dispute with Brazil was peacefully resolved and their long-standing contention with Chile over the Beagle Channel was being mediated by the Vatican. Trade was on the rise with both the Soviets and Western Europe. Perhaps best of all, relations were improving with the US as the United States sought South American support for its emerging policies in Central America. (16:79)

It is important to note that three different Juntas evolved from the original coup in 1976, each with its own characteristics, personality, and priorities. (16:76) The first had lasted from 1976-1980 and the second until December 1981. The third Junta consisted of General Galtieri as President (he had been commander-in-chief of the Army since March 1981), Admiral Anaya, Chief of the Navy, and Brigadier Lami Dozo, Chief of the Air Force. As this Junta took control, the major domestic problem it faced was the economy. It took steps to open up its own political process with an aim of conducting elections by 1984 (this went a long way toward improving the atmosphere with Washington). In the area of foreign affairs, the Junta considered the problems with Brazil resolved; the Beagle Channel issue was worrisome but under peaceful mediation. The most difficult issue appeared to be bilateral relations with Britain over the persistent question on sovereignty of the Falklands. (16:78) With a new round of talks scheduled in just two months, the new Junta elevated this issue to the highest priority.

Ups and Downs in Negotiations

Following the passage of UN General Assembly Resolution 2065 in 1965, Great Britain and Argentina entered a protocol of yearly bilateral meetings to negotiate a resolution of the sovereignty issue. "By 1968, the . . .

negotiations had developed a near-transference of sovereignty to Argentina with full regard to the 'interests' and safe-guards of the islanders." (16:90) However, a situation developed which torpedoed the agreement and reopened the original "interests" versus "wishes" issue. This set a pattern for the negotiations for the next 14 years and served to harden, and thus distance, the positions of both sides.

A gentleman by the name of William Hunter-Christie was at the eye of the storm. A former British Foreign Office official in Buenos Aires, Christie was fond of the islanders and their way of life, and sympathetic to their desire to remain under the Union Jack. (16:90) Thus, when asked by a confidant in the Ministry of Defense (MOD) if he knew that London wanted "to sell the Falklands to Argentina," Christie swung into action. (38:46) In 1968, he successfully formed a coalition which included the Falklands Island Company and several sympathetic members of Parliament (MPs). This coalition, known by several names including the "Falkland Islands Committee" (38:46) and the "Falkland Islands Pressure Group" (16:90), forged an effective lobby characterized by prepared press reports and blistering attacks by MPs against government speakers in both Houses of Parliament.

The government was caught flat-footed by the row that erupted and admitted that the islanders had not

been consulted. To limit the political damage being caused by intense questioning, the government finally buckled and assured Parliament that "the wishes of the islanders are an absolute condition." (38:47) In November of 1968, the Foreign Office dispatched Lord Chalfont to consult with the islanders about their "wishes." It was a visit doomed to fail for the islanders now realized they had the equivalent of a veto authority. (38:47) Chalfont concluded that feelings about the sovereignty issue ran so high, both in Argentina and on the islands, that "If no solution was found, there might one day be conflict." (38:48) The fact that the Falkland Islands Committee had succeeded in having the key phrase "wishes" replace "interests" assured that no solution would be forthcoming.

After the breakdown in 1968, negotiations cooled and assumed a low profile until 1974. Britain realized that productive negotiations were not possible in the face of the heated domestic opposition generated by the Falkland Lobby. Britain, therefore, convinced Argentina to avoid pressing the sovereignty issue and to rely instead on a strategy designed to increase islanders' trust and confidence in Argentina. For example, a deal was made allowing Argentina to establish air and mail service to the islands. Also during this time period, both countries had other, more pressing problems to deal with: Argentina faced internal strife and Britain was fighting economic problems and an

energy crisis. (16:98) In essence, Britain adopted a policy of "talking for the sake of talking" with Argentina. (16:93) This policy succeeded in holding the line until 1974.

Under Argentine diplomatic pressure the two nations agreed to renew their annual talks in 1974 with the issue of sovereignty back on the agenda. (16:97) The talks resumed but were less than cordial as Argentina tired of Britain's stalling tactics. (38:50) By March 1976, the military Junta that had replaced the Peron Government was taking a more aggressive position on the issue. Disagreements ensued and at one point ambassadors were withdrawn. (38:50) Rumors surfaced that Argentina was making plans for a military invasion (38:53) and Britain dispatched two frigates and a submarine to the South Atlantic. (38:52) Conditions improved somewhat in 1977 but when the Foreign Office in Britain began to show signs of a breakthrough on "economic cooperation" with Argentina, the initiative was again sidetracked by the Falkland Islands Committee. (38:51)

Britain changed governments in the summer of 1979 and began a determined effort to find a solution agreeable to all parties. Nicholas Ridley was the Foreign Office official in charge. Ridley devised a "lease-back" agreement similar to Britain's agreement with Hong Kong. (38:53) The Argentinians showed interest but Ridley knew that he would need the support of the islanders to sway the House of Commons. His November 1980 visit to the islands for this

purpose was somewhat successful and, after a stop in Buenos Aires, Ridley returned to England with a glint of hope. But by then the Falkland Islands Committee had received word of the plan from contacts on the islands. Ridley and his plan were attacked and ravaged both in Parliament and the press. (16:100) The effort died. Time would show that this was the last real opportunity for a negotiated settlement. The situation worsened somewhat during 1981 as the Falkland Islands Committee was now insisting that islanders be represented at all future meetings and that sovereignty be dropped from the agenda for 25 years. (16:100)

A Time For Assessment

With negotiations deadlocked in 1980, both nations took stock of the situation. In London the official view held that Argentina was a "passive actor" rather than a "potential aggressor." (16:108) The strategy was to keep the talks alive, introducing the sovereignty issue just often enough to keep Argentina interested. (16:108-109) The British Ambassador in Buenos Aires, backed by intelligence reports, provided warnings of a possible invasion by the Argentinians if talks stalled again. (38:55-56) These warnings, which had been sounded repeatedly for some time, were dismissed by Lord Carrington's foreign office. (16:106) In their view, the Argentinians were ". . . emotional Latin people, incapable of incisive action. After all, they had

been in a state of agitation about the Falklands for a century and more and would probably continue in that state for another hundred years. In any case, . . . the leaders had enough to worry about without 'going military' over the Falklands." (24:10)

The new Junta in Argentina met seriously for the first time in January 1982. The Falklands issue received high priority due to its "problematic context" and because the next round of discussions with the British were scheduled for February. (16:112-113) During this meeting they agreed to press for a return to the original negotiating baseline established in 1965, that is, bilateral talks on sovereignty while considering the "interests" of the islanders. Secondly, they carefully reviewed the British Parliamentary debates of 14-16 December and noted repeated themes of self-determination for the islanders and the need for a permanent Royal Navy presence in the South Atlantic. (16:113) Along these lines, they believed there was a possibility of collusion between the Falkland Islands Committee, the Falkland Island Company, and even some elements of the Admiralty, to make a case for Royal Navy presence in the area, thus reversing decisions in the June 1981 Defense White Paper. (16:114) They also noted that when the going got tough, the government would invariably succumb to the Falkland Lobby rather than "honor its negotiating terms with Argentina." (16:114) Finally, they took

note of the fact that Mrs. Thatcher seemed to be, in this instance, sticking with the original decision to close the British survey station on South Georgia Island and withdraw the HMS Endurance. This provided their only glimmer of hope that negotiations might still be possible. (16:114-115)

The result of the Junta's meeting was a "double decision." First, they would attempt to offset the pressure applied by the Falkland Lobby by insisting on an increased tempo of negotiations (monthly vice annual). Secondly, and as a precaution, they ordered "preparations for a military alternative." (16:115) This was done to counter the possibility of either a complete break in negotiations or a decision to dispatch a permanent Royal Navy force to the area. (16:115) This is not to suggest that the Argentinians expected to see the Royal Navy, particularly in light of the looming cuts to the surface fleet. In fact, in February 1982 the Argentine Foreign Ministry was informed by its London Embassy "that the British were militarily weak and that its Navy was 'virtually non-existent'." (24:8) Additionally, the Embassy reported "the English [sic] public will not fight for the Malvinas. The English will never again go to war for a colony." (24:8)

Thus the stage was set. The British were content to employ stalling tactics in negotiations with no serious intent of making concessions or progress. They were also confident that Argentina would not resort to military action.

On the other hand, Argentina still retained some hope for a negotiated agreement and did not believe that the British could send a sizable naval force to the South Atlantic. The rapidly unfolding events on the Island of South Georgia in March would provide the catalyst for these misperceptions to break down and erupt into war.

Bargaining Table to Bomb Alley

Britain did not respond to the Argentine proposal for an increased tempo of negotiations. Talks were held as scheduled in February and were cordial but unproductive, frustrating the Argentinian delegation. (16:116) This prompted the Argentinian Foreign Minister, Costa Mendez, to send a strong letter threatening to break off talks and lodge a protest at the UN if Britain failed to respond by March 30. (16:116) There is also some undocumented evidence that Argentina had decided on a limited military action at Port Stanley if the impasse had not improved by October 1982. (16:117) It appears that the Junta had committed itself, by not later than their first meeting in January 1982, to regaining the Falklands before the 150th anniversary of "occupation" in January 1983. Further, that the Junta's desired means of regaining the islands would be diplomatic, and that they viewed a limited military operation as simply an extension of diplomacy as opposed to an act of violence. Finally, while October may have been

viewed by the Junta as a "not later than" date, they were fully prepared for such an operation earlier than October should a situation arise which conveniently lent itself to exploitation (recall, they had ordered "preparations" in January).

British intransigence was paying off for them because it was maintaining the status quo. (16:108-109) After 17 years, however, the Argentines had become frustrated with the impasse. The state of Argentinian internal and external affairs was such that, by the end of 1981, the new Junta was able to give the sovereignty issue the highest priority. (16:112) Regaining the islands would not only settle a long-term dispute but would also produce immediate popular support for the new regime.

The British government had made it clear since 1968 that it wanted to transfer sovereignty to Argentina and that it would have already done so if it were not for the domestic pressure applied by the Falkland Lobby. It was equally clear that the British Foreign Office consistently caved in to this pressure to avoid domestic political hot water. (16:113)

Given these sets of circumstances, it was logical for the Argentinians to conclude that what Britain needed was a solid nudge to move off dead center; that given enough diplomatic pressure the British government would bear up to lobby pressure and move to resolve the issue. After all,

hadn't Mrs. Thatcher already bucked lobby pressure in sticking with her decision to withdraw Endurance? (16:114-115) First would come the proposal for monthly talks, and then the March 30 deadline for a British reply. (16:116-117) Failing that, there would be a break in negotiations coupled with a protest to the UN. Should this also fail to move the British, a limited military initiative would be conducted at Port Stanley. (16:117) This would focus world attention and provide Argentina a sympathetic international audience to whom it could voice its protest about Britain's unreasonable intransigence. Could they actually pull this off?

The Argentinians obviously thought they could. After all, the Royal Navy's surface fleet was about to be dismantled as a result of the June 1981 White Paper. Even the limited presence of the HMS Endurance would soon be gone. Without a credible Navy, and in the absence of forward air bases, the British would be helpless to respond. In any case, the action at Stanley would be limited, with strict orders to keep casualties to a minimum. By avoiding the appearance of a Third World nation trying to humiliate militarily a mid-size world power, the transition could be kept in diplomatic channels with a minimum loss of "face" for Britain.

Against this backdrop we can briefly consider the incident on South Georgia Island that began on 19 March and which eventually led to the Argentine invasion at Port

Stanley on 2 April. Although administered by British authorities in Port Stanley, South Georgia Island is a direct dependency of the United Kingdom and not in any way related to the Falkland Islands. (38:68) On 19 March an Argentinian scrap metal dealer named Davidoff disembarked on South Georgia with a crew of about 40 men to begin salvage work on a whaling station owned by a firm in Scotland. (38:68) He had made a contract with the firm, good for four years, and he had informed the British Embassy in Buenos Aires of his plans and schedule. (16:122) The party had arrived on an Argentinian fleet auxiliary vessel and marines on board helped the party unload their supplies. (38:68) They also raised an Argentine flag. Davidoff neglected a required protocol by failing to first call on the Chief of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) at Grytviken, which was not far from his landing site at Leith. Davidoff was aware of this requirement because he had made the same omission during a survey visit the previous December. (18:122) This had outraged the British Governor on the Falklands, Rex Hunt, who tried to arrest Davidoff, only to be denied permission to do so by the British Foreign Office. (16:122) In spite of the fact that Hunt had no jurisdiction over South Georgia, he prohibited Davidoff from returning there. Curiously enough, Hunt had been informed of the March visit by the Embassy in Buenos Aires and asked if he had objections, but he gave no reply. (16:123) It should be

noted here, too, that the Falkland Islands Committee was very concerned about Davidoff's presence. With the scheduled closing of the BAS looming, the only remaining presence on South Georgia would be Davidoff's Argentinian crew.

During the offloading operation of the 19th, four BAS scientists happened to arrive at Leith on a field trip. They confronted the Captain, protested the Argentinian flag, and informed the Captain that his presence would be reported to the BAS chief. This was done and the chief notified Hunt, asking for advice. Hunt advised that the Argentinians would have to leave Leith and proceed to Grytviken to "formalize" their arrival. (16:68) The Argentine Captain refused, lowered his flag and departed, leaving Davidoff and party behind. (16:69) With surprising swiftness, London newspapers were reporting the Argentinian "invasion" of South Georgia.

In another curious note, the HMS Endurance had been in Grytviken on its farewell visit during the first two weeks of March but was suddenly recalled to Stanley by Hunt on 17 March, two days before Davidoff's arrival. (16:123) Endurance arrived in Stanley on the nineteenth, additional British marines boarded, and was dispatched back to South Georgia, on Hunt's orders, to evict the Argentinians. (16:123) Based on the initial reports out of Port Stanley about the invasion of South Georgia, the British government

publicly announced that Endurance was proceeding to Leith to evict the intruders. The British press made headlines with stories about the important role the soon-to-be-mothballed HMS Endurance was about to play. (16:123)

Following the initial shock in London, British intelligence discovered that the original reports were exaggerated and that, in fact, no Argentine troops were on South Georgia. (16:118) The British government attempted to deflate the situation and told Buenos Aires that it would, subject to debate in Parliament, rescind the eviction order. They also asked Argentina to remove the party from the island. The row that erupted in Parliament on 23 March predictably lambasted the government's policy in the South Atlantic and decried the cuts in the fleet, particularly the Endurance. (16:125) Parliament demanded action--the British would have to continue with eviction or look the part of weak fools. They informed Argentina on 23 March of their intentions to carry out the original plan. (16:119) At the urging of Parliament, several additional warships would sail for the South Atlantic for additional security.

Argentina responded by dispatching another fleet auxiliary ship to Leith--not to pick up the party but to defend them against the British. The swift arrival (25 March) of highly trained commandos suggests that Argentina may have had a previous plan of its own. (38:72) The Argentinian Foreign Minister who had stepped down with the

arrival of the Junta in December, later said: "I always had my eye on Davidoff. He was clearly going to be useful at some stage to ginger up the negotiations." (38:70)

The British response to this incident may well have surprised Argentina. Rather than having a South Georgia occupation "card" to play in negotiations, the Argentinians now faced a rapidly deteriorating situation. As a result of the debates in Parliament, the British assumed their toughest stance yet on negotiations--sovereignty was not to be discussed. (16:125) Additionally, the British were sending a small task force to the islands, a probable forerunner to increased, permanent naval presence. To the Argentinians it appeared the Foreign Office had once again caved in to lobby pressure. The situation was hopeless--negotiations for sovereignty were impossible. Yet, in spite of the few ships Britain was sending, the Argentinians still did not believe that the British had either the inclination or the capability to counter an invasion of Port Stanley. The time to act was now. Thus, on 26 March, the Junta ordered the invasion force to sail, which it did on 28 March. Little did the Junta realize how badly they had miscalculated the likely British response. And how badly Britain had underestimated Argentina's determination to regain the Falklands! Neither nation realized it at this point, but the war was on--entered by politicians for political reasons. Clausewitz was right.

CHAPTER III

THE BRITISH REPLY

When Argentina took Port Stanley on 2 April, it was not expecting Britain to respond with such swiftness and determination. (24:8) Both Parliament and the British public joined the Thatcher government in a chorus of outrage over the invasion. (24:27; 22:100) "A public opinion poll showed 83 percent in favor of regaining the Falklands and 53 percent favored the use of force." (24:27) While the islands remained of little strategic value ". . . the circumstance of their loss turned their recapture into a popular cause." (14:200) Argentina's optimism that their limited action would win international support and provide Britain with an excuse to negotiate with "honor" was quickly proven unfounded. (14:199)

On the day after the invasion, the UN Security Council voted ten to one (with four abstentions) in favor of Resolution 502, condemning the invasion and calling for an immediate Argentinian withdrawal. (24:22) Argentina refused, apparently believing the accuracy of its intelligence report: "If we occupy the Islands without violence, the British will make a great noise but will do nothing." (24:27; 22:100) General Galtieri reportedly believed that an "English reaction was scarcely possible and totally improbable." (6:33) Had the Argentinians properly

read the British, they would have realized that the invasion would be considered an act of war.

Britain had concluded on 31 March that the Argentines were going to invade. (38:102) On that day the government began the process of assembling the task force. Parliament met to debate the invasion on 3 April in its first Saturday session since the Suez crisis in 1956. During these debates, Mrs. Thatcher announced that the task force would sail for the South Atlantic the following Monday, April 5. (38:98) The government's action received strong support from both Left and Right, although the government was criticized for its failure to foresee and prevent this "national humiliation." (38:99; 14:200)

Task Force Sails

The task force sailed as planned on 5 April under the command of Admiral John "Sandy" Woodward. As it departed Portsmouth, the flotilla consisted of 30 ships led by the light carriers Hermes and Invincible. The task force was far from ready for combat. (26:83) Admiral Woodward later recounted:

> But do not imagine that some well-oiled monolith was swinging into action or that any corporate plan had emerged at the early state . . . We were going to war . . . with virtually none of the shore-based air we normally count on, against an enemy of which we knew little, and in a part of the world for which we had no concept of operations. (27:25)

It would take four weeks to travel the 7,000 miles required to reach the Falkland Islands area--time for diplomats to try to reach a negotiated solution. Woodward would spend the time wisely--learning about the enemy, sizing his force, studying its capabilities and strengths, and helping to formulate a strategy for defeating the Argentinians. He knew that the initial advantage went to Argentina. By taking the initiative they had achieved strategic surprise; they were in place on the Island, assuring themselves the advantage of position; and, they too had four weeks to prepare, but over much shorter lines of communication. Woodward was confident of at least one British advantage: "Our men are second to none." (27:26) His confidence was shared by Prime Minister (PM) Thatcher: "Failure? The possibilities do not exist. I'm not talking about failure. I am talking about supreme confidence in the British fleet, superlative troops, excellent equipment . . . We must go out calmly, quietly, to succeed." (24:29)

Battle Lines Are Drawn

The objective for "Operation Corporate," as the British effort was nicknamed, was clear from the start: ". . . There was only one aim--the single non-negotiable purpose to get the Argentines off the islands." (24:176) The civilian authorities provided other planning guidelines. (24:38-39) First, Mrs. Thatcher wanted the operation

completed by mid-June before the hard South Atlantic winter hit full stride and before Argentina could find fighting allies. Second, the objective must be achieved with minimum loss to British life and resources while keeping firepower at politically acceptable levels.

The British created a streamlined organizational structure to command and control Operation Corporate. The Prime Minister created a "war cabinet" that made all political and diplomatic decisions and provided broad military guidance. To their credit, they "offered no advice on how to implement the decisions. The civilians' constancy of political purpose was their most valuable contribution to the military effort." (14:208) Decisions were passed on to the Chief of the Defense Staff who, in turn, passed them on to his Deputy, Admiral Fieldhouse, who had been appointed Joint Force Commander (Commander Task Force 317). Admiral Fieldhouse had a joint force staff with land, surface, and air commanders who together provided overall direction to the war effort. Admiral Woodward, as Commander of the South Atlantic Task Force, reported directly to Admiral Fieldhouse from whom he received his guidance and direction. Woodward was given the freedom to plan and execute his tasking as he saw fit. (18:102) The system worked well as Admiral Woodward later recounted: "The quality and speed of support was reflected in . . . the area of command, control and political support from home. Very rapidly I became aware of

a feeling of complete accord and mutual confidence between myself and my Commander-in-Chief. We were all part of one national group, working to one national authority." (27:27)

Know Your Enemy, Know Yourself

> If you want to overcome your enemy, you must match your effort against his power of resistance . . . The extent of the means at his disposal is a matter--though not exclusively--of figures, and should be measurable. But the strength of his will is much less easy to determine and can only be gauged approximately by the strength of the motive animating it. (7:77)

As the task force proceeded south, Woodward received intelligence data from home which provided the Argentine order of battle (see Appendix for detailed listing). The force was formidable--large, although somewhat aged, and armed with modern weapons, such as the Exocet missile. (27:25) The Navy had two submarines which could pose a significant threat to the fleet. One aircraft carrier could operate with up to 12 A-4 attack aircraft, and they, too, could threaten the fleet. The Navy also had a limited number of Super Etendard aircraft, recently purchased from the French along with the highly lethal Exocet anti-shipping missile. The Argentine Air Force (Fuerza Aerea Argentina, or FAA) flew Mirage and A-4 Skyhawk fighter-attack aircraft and Canberra bombers. Refueling could be accomplished using C-130 or other A-4/Etendard aircraft modified with extra fuel tanks.

Given the radius of operation for these aircraft, Woodward could expect attacks on the task force from Mirages and A-4s, and from the Etendards if refueled. (3:8-9) The Etendard was most worrisome given the capabilities of the Exocet missile. Canberras were not seen as a threat because their slow speed made them very vulnerable. Attacks could be expected from three bases on the mainland as well as from the carrier. Port Stanley airfield was too short (4200 feet) for jet operations and there were no indications that the Argentinians were taking any measures to lengthen it. Numerous Pucara ground attack aircraft were forward deployed to several sites on the islands but these would pose no threat to the fleet. Although Woodward did not have precise figures on the number of aircraft operationally capable of attacking his force, he knew that he was terribly outnumbered, perhaps by as much as four-to-one. But, numbers aside, what about the enemy's will? This remained an unknown.

In assessing his own force Woodward faced severe limitations in most every area. British forces had been structured to operate in coalition with NATO allies and designed for narrow missions. (3:9; 6:36) Now they would be going it alone, covering all aspects of the mission with its limited force. The strength of the task force lay in its five submarines and eight guided missile destroyers. These would be valuable assets when it came to providing security

for the task force. More bothersome was the lack of tactical air assets. Between the Hermes and Invincible, only 20 Sea Harriers could be squeezed aboard, doubling its normal complement. (13:19) In addition to the Harriers, the two ships boarded 27 Sea King helicopters, 18 for the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) role and nine for transport. Because of their small size the carriers could not handle any airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft. "If the task force possessed an 'Achilles heel', then it was the lack of AEW and the consequent problem of providing the warships with adequate air defense." (4:186) Additionally, the Argentines were sure to judge the Hermes and Invincible to be the task force's center of gravity and thus allocate to them the highest targeting priority. Admiral Woodward said: ". . . It was very early appreciated that the loss of one, much less both, carriers would immediately and seriously prejudice the whole operation and probably kill any thought of longer term operations." (27:25) Admiral Train of the US would later analyze what Woodward already knew: "The British task force lacked an in-depth defense. It required the type of tactical air support a large deck aircraft carrier could have provided. . . ." (36:40) Being out-numbered and lacking critical capabilities, Woodward knew that success would depend on superior strategy, tactics, and training of the individual combatants. As one expert later

noted: ". . . The war remained a Knute Rockne game of fundamentals . . . " (22:101)

CHAPTER IV

A STRATEGY FOR VICTORY

While the task force continued south, Admiral Fieldhouse's staff in London was developing the overall strategy for Operation Corporate. The concept they produced thoughtfully accounted for the objective, political caveats, and the capabilities of both their own and the Argentine forces. They envisioned a five-phase operation in which air power was to play a critical role. (27:27)

Strategy of Phased Operations

The British strategy was straightforward and quite simple. Phase one, in effect as the force sailed south, was the "work-up" or preparation phase. (27:27) The fleet practiced maneuvers enroute and Sea Harrier pilots flew simulated combat sorties over the sea. Meanwhile, preparations were also in full swing at home. Major modifications were being made on the many requisitioned ships taken up from trade (STUFT). They ranged from converting luxury liners to troop transports, to modifying container ships to serve as mini aircraft carriers. Major modifications were also made to British air assets. For example, the ground attack version of the Harrier (GR3), which joined the fleet with the war in progress, had to be wired to carry the AIM-9 missile and also had to have an

improvised inertial navigation system (INS) installed to allow for operations afloat. Six Vulcan bombers were converted to tankers and some Nimrod aircraft were modified to carry AIM-9 or Harpoon missiles. (3:14-17) These examples reflect a clear picture of the close cooperation the conflict elicited between the civilian and military sectors in Britain. (17:249) The speed with which they worked demonstrated the national sense of urgency generated by the crisis.

Phase two was to consist of a blockade of the Falklands. (27:27) The Argentine forces garrisoned on the Island represented Argentina's center of gravity. The Argentines had failed to provide sufficient supplies on the Island so "unless the Argentines could have broken the air and sea blockade, their garrison . . . was bound to fold up in time." (37:54; 36:38) Therefore, "a prerequisite for most of the strategic alternatives was to blockade the defending forces." (14:203) To this end the British, on 12 April, declared a 200-mile maritime exclusion zone (MEZ) around the Falklands. When the main task force arrived in the area with its Sea Harriers, the zone was vertically expanded as a total exclusion zone (TEZ). The zone became effective on 30 April and applied to any Argentine aircraft or vessel. The rules were made clear by the British Defense Secretary, Mr. John Nott: "We will shoot first, we will sink them." (24:44-45) Maintaining an effective blockade across

such a wide area with limited forces was more realistically assessed by Admiral Woodward: ". . . it is impossible to prevent incursions by a determined foe in a battle of manoeuvre." (27:20).

The British also planned on a major demonstration of force during this phase. (27:27) The preferred method was the recapture of the lightly defended South Georgia Island. This would serve several purposes. First, British territory would be back in British hands. Second, it would provide a deep port at safe distances for ships of the fleet. Third, it would provide a morale boost for the British while demoralizing the Argentines. Finally, it would demonstrate British resolve, encouraging the Argentines to voluntarily take leave of the Falklands.

Even if a total blockade could have been effectively maintained, there would be no guarantee that the Argentines would have capitulated by Mrs. Thatcher's mid-June goal. It was therefore prudent to plan the next two phases of the operation. Phase three would consist of a major amphibious operation putting ashore thousands of British troops and tons of equipment. A beachhead would be established as rapidly as possible, followed immediately by phase four, sustained operations ashore, to bring the Argentines to defeat. Phase five would consist of clean-up and policing actions, following the Argentinian surrender, as the Island transitioned back to British rule. (27:27)

The Role of Airpower

Airpower was to be used in several of its classic roles during the campaign: Counter-air (offensive and defensive), close air support (CAS), and strategic bombing. Tactical Reconnaissance was very limited, normally flown by Harriers, and usually in conjunction with their ground attack missions. Interdiction was not a major factor given the isolated nature of the battlefield. Helicopters made significant contributions with near-continuous ASW operations, massive movements of troops and supplies, and sea rescue. (That this report focuses on fixed-wing operations in no way diminishes the key role played by rotary wing assets.)

Defensive counter-air was, by necessity, the first mission to be addressed. (9:134) "The primary concern of the Fleet Commander must be to establish air superiority over his task force . . ." (1:216) Given the paucity of Sea Harriers and the lack of AEW radars, this task would be complex and difficult. With exceptional skill, good timing, and correct positioning of the task force, local air superiority should be possible for short durations. Air supremacy, i.e., total freedom of the skies, was out of the question. Because of this, the British planned on using a concept of "defense in depth" where "the air cover the Sea Harrier provided was intended only a a first line of defense." (3:26; 35:172) The second line would be taken up

by the guided missile destroyers placed on the expected axis of attack between the attackers and the task force. The final line was point defense using close-in weapons systems which included a combination of either radar controlled or manually sighted missiles and guns.

Even with the Argentine aircraft operating at their maximum ranges, the limited number of Sea Harriers, operating without AEW, were not expected to form an impenetrable wall. The task was further complicated by two factors. First, realizing the importance of the carriers to the success of the operation, Admiral Woodward placed them at the eastern extreme of the TEZ as an additional precaution against Argentine air attack, particularly from the Etendard/Exocet combination. While this put the carriers out of effective range of the Argentines, it also stretched the Sea Harriers to their fuel limits, reducing their time on combat air patrol (CAP). (17:250) This required near-continuous launch and recovery operations. In order to cover three CAPs of two aircraft each, 18 aircraft had to be airborne at once--six on station, six enroute, and six returning. (14:190) The second problem related to the Harrier radar which was designed to pick up targets over the sea at medium altitude. (3:9-10) Argentine pilots quickly learned to approach low and fast and to use the Falkland terrain features whenever possible. "In the absence of airborne radars and airborne fighter control, CAP

fighters cannot themselves be expected to acquire and attack all incoming enemy aircraft." (15:927) On a near-daily basis the British were retaught the lesson that ". . . AEW . . . should be an integral part of any carrier task force operating outside the range of shore-based air cover." (26:84)

The British offensive counter-air effort got off to a slow start for several reasons. First, with task force protection a top priority, the majority of Sea Harriers were required for CAP missions. Secondly, the Sea Harrier was designed for air-air and maritime attack missions. (3:9-10) The radars were not well suited for ground attack nor were the pilots trained in that role. Nonetheless, Sea Harriers did fly limited airfield attack missiles at Port Stanley, Darwin, and Goose Green. The prime targets at those airfields were Pucura aircraft and helicopters, thus following the advice rendered by Douhet four decades earlier: "It is easier and more effective to destroy the enemy's aerial power by destroying his nests and eggs on the ground than to hunt his flying birds in the air." (11:190) The offensive counter-air effort increased significantly when the RAF Harrier GR3s joined the task force. These aircraft were designed for the ground attack role and their pilots well trained for that mission.

During the British amphibious landing on 21 May, and during the sustained operations ashore that followed the

landing, the Harrier GR3s flew in a close air support role. (17:252) As the British ground forces maneuvered from objective to objective on the way from San Carlos to Port Stanley, RAF Harrier pilots were called upon to soften the defenses, morale, and resistance of the defending Argentine troops. On 5 June Harriers began flying from a forward operating base (FOB) at San Carlos providing quicker response to the ground commanders' requests, increased loiter time, and reduced turnaround time. (3:28; 27:31)

Long-range strategic bombing opened the British offensive campaign on 1 May. (17:250) Vulcan bombers had been refitted with refueling probes and forward deployed to Ascension Island. From Ascension the Vulcans flew to the Falklands, bombed Port Stanley airfield, and returned to Ascension--flights of just under 16 hours (3:21) Although limited in number, these missions, which were all flown at night, had a two-fold purpose over and above any direct damage that would be inflicted. First, they would harass the Argentine force on an around-the-clock basis. (3:21) Second, the missions demonstrated that Argentine operating bases on the mainland could be subject to bombing by the Vulcans. Thus, it was envisioned that Argentina would be forced to dedicate at least a portion of its fighter force to strategic air defense, thus reducing the number of aircraft available to attack the task force.

Effectiveness of Airpower

Any attempt to analyze the effectiveness of British airpower must be prefaced by an examination of the context in which it was employed. One of the most obvious features of the campaign was the joint nature of operations. (19:47) The campaign could not have succeeded using only air, only land, or only sea forces, or even any two in combination--all three forces were required to achieve the objective. Major General Jeremy Moore, who served as Commander Land Forces, Falkland Islands, put it this way: "The ability to operate central joint command of our national force was war winning . . . We were thus able to be really joint. We won because we were unified, the enemy were not." (27:31) The operation provides a model of joint operations. In this regard the effectiveness of airpower must be judged in its role as a contributor to the total effort. Another expert analyzed it this way: "Air power alone could not win the war . . . The combined actions of mutually supportive air, ground and naval forces decide the difference between victory and defeat." (12:86)

The most challenging role for tactical air was defensive counter-air, that is providing air cover for the task force both afloat and during the amphibious operations and subsequent establishment of the beachhead. The fact that this task was aggravated by stand-off distance of the carrier, limited assets, and no AEW has already been

explained. Given these limitations, how effective was the air cover?

The British never achieved air supremacy, but this was no surprise. (25:36) On the other hand, they were generally able to maintain local air superiority for at least a limited time. This was due in part to the failure of the Argentinians to exercise the principles of mass and concentration of force. On those few occasions when they chose to overwhelm the British defenses with superior numbers, concentrated in space and time, they achieved stunning results. However, it should be noted that "in spite of its spectacular success against British ships, Argentina lost the air-to-air war decisively. Argentine fighter aircraft failed to shoot down a single Harrier." (12:81) Additionally, it is worth noting that the lethality of British defenses, both air and surface, forced the Argentinians to press their attacks from such low altitudes that many of their bombs had insufficient time for fuze arming before hitting their target. (12:85) In spite of this, ". . . the Argentine fighters turned out to be a formidable opponent . . . right up to the final push on Stanley, Argentine fighters penetrated British airspace consistently, causing substantial damage to the fleet." (12:80)

The biggest challenge for air cover occurred during the amphibious operation and beachhead establishment from

1-5 May. Referring to Argentine air strategy, Admiral Train comments: "Their expectation was to damage the British landing force during the landing when their freedom of movement was limited." (36:39) Another expert noted: "If there was one lesson to be learned from the battles of the last world war, it was that naval operations, particularly landing operations, need organic air cover. The airspace over the beachhead must be in the hands of the landing force." (1:216) These lessons were certainly not lost on Admiral Woodward: "That we failed to achieve air supremacy before the landings and that we stood to lose several ships was well recognized." (27:30) All the same, the landing was necessary--he would have to depend on his few air assets to do their best, and on luck. He got both.

The initial stages of the landing were masked by foul weather and low ceilings. But later that day, as the weather cleared, the Argentines attacked in mass, losing 15 aircraft, 12 of those to Harriers. (13:237-238) The British lost one Harrier to ground fire and the Argentines destroyed the HMS Ardent. Luck also played its part. Numerous Argentine bombs struck British ships but failed to detonate, and of all ships hit, none were the amphibious vessels or supply ships that required protection. Admiral Woodward commented: "That it would be the Escorts we lost rather than the amphibious shipping was a stroke of luck and probably the enemy's single biggest mistake." (27:30) But Woodward's

luck was far from over. For unknown reasons, perhaps poor weather on the mainland or the losses suffered on 21 May, the Argentines failed to mount any further attacks for 36 hours. This time was well spent, in clear weather, moving critical supplies ashore unhindered by enemy harassment. "It was not possible that first day to land the heavy equipment the troops needed to advance. Had the supply line been cut the following day . . . the whole assault could have withered." (24:90-91) As Clausewitz concluded, ". . . Through the element of chance, guesswork and luck come to play a great part in war." (7:85)

If the defensive counter-air campaign was singularly successful, the results of the offensive counter-air (OCA) and strategic bombing efforts were less so. "One of the surprises of the war was the inefficiency of the bombing against airfields and unshielded aircraft." (15:935) Harriers only destroyed nine Argentine aircraft on the ground, although many more were damaged. (13:235-243) By contrast, British Special Forces destroyed 11 aircraft on the ground during a single raid at Pebble Island. These facts may raise some question as to the validity of Douhet's "nest and egg" postulation. Additionally, the attacks never succeeded in closing Stanley airfield which continued to receive vital supplies, most always at night, from the Argentine mainland. Several experts viewed this British failure as "probably the most important of the campaign."

(15:932; 21:888) In fairness it must be noted that only a small percentage of Harrier sorties were flown on airfield attack missions, particularly at Stanley: "Antiaircraft (35mm and 20mm guns), plus Tigercat and Roland surface-to-air missiles . . . posed too great a risk for the Harriers to mount an intensive campaign." (12:83) With limited assets, Admiral Woodward realized he would have to manage his attrition carefully.

Strategic bombing was no more successful against Stanley airfield. No Argentine aircraft were known to be lost to Vulcan bombing, and only minimal damage was noted to runways, taxiways, or other facilities. Of the 21 bombs dropped by Vulcans on the opening night of the campaign, only one struck the runway causing very minimal damage. The strategic bombing was not without its effects, however. As noted earlier, the bombing served as harassment to the Argentines at Stanley and also caused concern over defense of the Argentine mainland. Additionally, the bombings forced dispersal of Pucara aircraft away from Stanley. This weakened Argentine offensive air support efforts due to a lack of fuel, ordnance, and communication at dispersed sites. (25:38) At least one expert believes that this dispersal of Argentine assets may well ". . . have been a factor in their failure to mount well-coordinated attacks against British positions on land." (25:38)

Although less well-documented, the close air support provided by the Harriers appears to have been more than adequate: "In typical naval tradition, no request of the land force commander appears to have been ignored." (9:134) Referring to his role once the ground forces were established ashore, Admiral Woodward noted: "From then on, my role became one of supporting the land force commander. . . ." (27:30) Sea Harriers continued to provide air cover against attacking Argentine aircraft while Harrier GR3s flew in direct support of the ground commander's scheme of maneuver. As noted earlier, this support was enhanced on 5 June with the establishment of a forward operating base at San Carlos.

Very clearly, neither the surface fleet nor the amphibious operation could have survived without the protection of airpower. On the other hand, both the air and ground forces were dependent upon the naval forces for their transport, logistics lifeline, and firepower. In the end ground forces were required to complete the task that neither air nor sea power could accomplish on their own. Where Argentina placed the heaviest load on its air force, "British air power made its greatest contribution as part of an integrated combat effort . . . As demonstrated in the South Atlantic conflict, air power, one essential element of a combined force, played a key role in determining both victory and defeat." (12:86)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

> In Port Stanley at 9 P.M. Falklands time tonight, June 14, 1982, Major General Menendez surrendered to me all Argentine forces in east and west Falkland, together with their impedimenta . . . The Falkland Islands are once more under the government desired by their inhabitants. God save the Queen. J. J. Moore (38:279)

The war was over, just 45 days after the first British bombs fell on Stanley airfield, 25 days after British ground forces put ashore, and one day before Mrs. Thatcher's mid-June deadline. Although the war was short, the victory cost the Crown dearly. The British suffered 255 dead and the Treasury expended approximately one million pounds for each of the 1,700 inhabitants of the Island! For their effort the British regained the status quo: They possessed the Islands, the Argentines still claimed them, and no negotiations would be forthcoming.

Lessons For the US

In Chapter II we saw that the Falklands war was essentially entered as a result of the misperceptions and miscalculations of both nations. Britain did not believe, even in the face of mounting evidence, that the Argentines had the will to take the Islands by force. On the other hand, Argentina was witnessing what it believed to be the dismantling of the British surface fleet. With its commitment to NATO defense and nuclear deterrence, and in

light of constrained budgets, Britain was forced to make significant cuts in their conventional forces, and the Royal Navy was targeted. These cuts sent signals which were interpreted by Argentina as British inability to project power to the South Atlantic, and of a diminishing interest in the Falklands. As we saw, these misperceptions led to war.

The US should review this lesson carefully. We are currently experiencing two phenomena which could lead to a situation ripe for misperception, with consequences much more catastrophic than the Falklands war. The first of these is the US budget deficit. The second is peristroika, the Soviet program of internal restructuring.

The US budget deficit has reached politically unacceptable levels, forcing politicians to take corrective actions. The military budget has become the main target for cuts since the only other option, reduction in social service programs, is not viewed as politically acceptable. Defense is "big" in the public's view, laden with waste (as reported almost daily in the media), and in any case was heavily funded and revitalized over the past eight or 10 years. Aren't "they" finished rebuilding yet? Congress has answered, and the answer is "yes". We have already witnessed the first major cuts, measured in the tens of billions, with more cuts promised for each year into the foreseeable planning future. The implication is clear--the

services will shrink and with them will shrink the national defense capability of the US. Congress has judged this to be an acceptable risk.

Degree of risk is calculated by measuring your strength against the strength (threat) of your potential enemies. The Soviet Union has represented the major threat to US interests for nearly four decades. Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev's program for peristroika represents an acknowledgment of the gross economic stagnation in the Soviet Union. The program is focused on economic revitalization with an increased standard of living as a by-product. A major pillar in this program is significantly reduced military spending. This reflects a major shift in the Soviet approach, which now sets military "sufficiency" as the desired goal, as opposed to superiority. To what degree, and at what speed, this will occur is yet to be seen. How long it will last is also unknown.

Perestroika is being enthusiastically welcomed in the US, especially by those who have lobbied for large cuts to the US defense budget. They see perestroika as evidence of a retreating Soviet threat. This view was heightened by the December '87 signing of the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty, Soviet talk of withdrawals from Afghanistan, and rumors of reductions in Soviet conventional force strength in Eastern Europe. In the US the synergistic effect of these events has produced an accelerated optimism

that the Soviets have "turned the corner" and now are content to live and let live. The result has been an increasing number and volume of voices calling for reduced defense spending now that the threat is diminishing. There has been a rush in some corners to make slashing reductions in the long-range strategic nuclear force, increasing opposition to the costly Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), and more frequent talk of "bringing the troops back from Europe."

Enter the Falklands war: Misperceptions. Many argue that the defense budget should take its share of belt-tightening as part of a national effort to reduce the deficit. But great care must be taken in making significant force structure reductions based on our perception of similar reductions in the threat. The Soviets have talked of reductions, but none has been seen to date. US reductions should only be made on the basis of fact, not optimism. US reductions are real and will quickly be upon us. They will be correctly perceived as a decreased US capability to project power worldwide to protect US national interests. This could lead to the misperception that those interests are no longer seen as important in the US; much as Argentina thought that Britain no longer saw the Falklands as important enough to go to war over.

The lesson for the US is clear: Defense requirements must be established based on clearly defined US

interests and the threat that potential enemies pose to those interests. The threat must be factually established and analyzed in that context. Funding the defense requirement with a sufficient budget is then essential. By choosing not to do so, the US assumes the risk that potential adversaries will misperceive either our willingness or our ability to protect these interests. In that event, the US should not be surprised to see adversaries testing our resolve in perceived soft spots. As the British learned in the Falklands, the cost of the cure far outweighs the price of prevention.

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

APRIL

1-2	Argentine invading force lands on East Falkland; British contingent surrenders. Argentine reinforcements/supplies begin to arrive from mainland.
3	UN Security Council passes Resolution 502 calling for immediate withdrawal of Argentinian troops; Argentine forces invade South Georgia, overpower British resistance and take control of island.
4	British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington resigns; Queen Elizabeth II approves order to requisition merchant ships.
5	Royal Navy Task Force departs UK on "Operation Corporate"
6	European Economic Community votes to embargo Argentina; Argentina marines who took the Falklands are replaced with conscripts.
7	British announce 200 mi Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) effective from 2300, 11 April; Argentine strength on Falklands reaches 6,000.
8	Major General Menendez sworn in as Governor of Malvinas.
12	MEZ goes into effect.
14	Argentine troop strength estimated at 10,000;
21	SS Atlantic conveyor departs UK with 11 Harriers, 10 helicopters and other supplies.
23	British Special Operations Reconnaissance Teams land on South Georgia Island.
25	British helicopters attack/disable Argentine submarine Sante Fe in Grytviken Harbor, South Georgia; British marines invade/retake South Georgia.

27 British reconnaissance teams land on East and West Falklands.

29 British Task Force arrives off Falkland Islands.

30 US Secretary of State Haig declares efforts to negotiate dispute fail; US ends neutrality, sides strongly with Britain promising aid/support.

30 British declare total exclusion zone (TEZ).

MAY

1 British conduct air attacks on Port Stanley and Goose Green Airfields; Argentines attack task force, lose three aircraft.

2 Argentine aircraft carrier 25 deMayo withdrawn; Cruiser General Belgrand sunk outside of TEZ by British nuclear submarine.

3 Cruise liner Queen Elizabeth II requisitioned as troop transport.

4 First British air loss (Sea Harrier and pilot) while conducting airfield attacks; HMS Sheffield abandoned after being struck by Exocet missile fired by Super Etendard (missile failed to explode but impact caused uncontrollable internal fires).

6 Two Sea Harriers lost in apparent mid-air collision.

7 TEZ extended to within 12 miles of coast of Argentina.

10 British task force strength reaches 88 ships; HMS Sheffield sinks while under tow.

12 Q.E. II departs UK with 3,200 British troops.

14-15 British raiding party at Pebble Island destroy 11 aircraft and large ammunition dump.

21 British land 5,000 troops and establish 10 square mile beachhead at Port San Carlos; Attacking Argentine Air Force losses heavy; British lose one Harrier and HMS Ardent; HMS Argonaut and HMS Antrim struck but not lost (bombs failed to explode); Harrier lost during attack on Port Stanley airfield.

23 FAA loses six Mirages and four A-4s during intense attacks on San Carlos beachhead; HMS Antelope struck and later destroyed (again, bombs did not explode on impact; exploded during defusing attempt.

24 FAA loses 18 more Mirage/Skyhawks during attacks on beachhead/landing party.

25 Argentine national holiday--72 aircraft launched to break British fleet; HMS Conventry and SS Atlantic conveyor lost to Argentine attacks.

28 British ground forces capture Goose Green and Darwin at a loss of 12 killed and 31 wounded; Argentines suffer over 350 casualties (killed or wounded) and over 2,000 taken prisoner.

30 British ground troops recover Douglas and Teal.

JUNE

2 British advance to positions seven miles north of Port Stanley.

5 British establish forward operating base at San Carlos for Harrier operations.

6-12 British reinforced by troops arriving on QE II; total British ground troop strength reaches 8,500.

8 FAA attacks Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad while unloading troops and supplies at Bluff Cove; British suffer 57 killed and lose Sir Galahad; FAA loses seven Mirages.

11 First phase of attack on Port Stanley begins; land-based Exocet hits and damages HMS Glamorgan.

13-14 British conduct phase two of attack to secure Port Stanley; Argentines formally surrender.

Source: Samuel L. Morison, "Falklands (Malvinas) Campaign: a Chronology", US Naval Institute Proceedings, 109/6/964 (June 1983): pp. 119-124.

APPENDIX B

British Air Order of Battle in the South Atlantic

(As of 1 May 1982 unless otherwise noted; excludes Ascension Island-based assets)

Type	Number	Remarks
Sea Harriers	20	Hermes-12, Invincible - 8
	8	Arrived 18 May
	28	
Harrier GR3s	6	Arrived 18 May
	2	Arrived 1 June
	2	Arrived 8 Jun
	10	
ASW Helicopters (Sea King)	25	
Transport Helicopter (Sea King)	13	
	10	Arrived 28 May
	23	
(Chinook)	1	Arrived 26 May
	24	
General Purpose Helicopters (Wessex, Wasp, Lynx	15	
	69	Arrived during conflict
	84	
Marine/Army Helicopters (Gazzelles, Scouts)	30	Arrived 21 May

Totals - 201

Fixed Wing		Rotary Wing	
Sea Harrier	28	ASW	25
Harrier Gr3	10	Transport	24
	38	General Purpose	114
			163

Source: Ethell and Price, Air War South Atlantic, (see Bibliography).

APPENDIX C

British Aircraft Losses

Lost to Enemy Action:

Type	Number	Remarks
Sea Harriers	2	1 small arms; 1 Roland missile
Harrier Gr3s	3	2 small arms; 1 AAA
Lynx	3	Lost with mother ships
Gazelle	3	2 small arms; 1 SAM
Wessex	7	Lost with mother ships
Chinook	3	Lost with mother ship
Scout	1	Shot down by Pucara
	22	

Lost For Other Reasons:

Type	Number	Remarks
Sea Harriers	4	Operational Accidents
Harrier GR3	1	Engine failure during landing
Sea King	5	4 Operational accidents; 1 classified
Wessex	2	Operational accident during rescue
	12	

Totals 34

By Type		By Cause	
Sea Harriers	6	Small Arms	5
Harrier GR3	4	SAM	2
Lynx	3	AAA	1
Gazzelle	3	Shot Down	1
Chinook	3	Lost with ship	13
Wessex	9	Operational accident	11
Sea King	5	Unknown (classified)	1
Scout	1		34
	34		

Source: Ethell and Price, Air War South Atlantic, and The Falklands Campaign; The Lessons, MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1983.

APPENDIX D

Argentine Air Order of Battle (A/O 1 May 82, Thought to be Operational) Total 251

Type		Number	Remarks
Fighter/Attack	A4 Skyhawk	57	
	Mirage	11	
	Dagger	34	Variant of Mirage V
	Super Etendard	4	
		106	
Bombers	Canberra	6	
Tankers	KC130	2	
ASW	S2E	6	
Recce	Learjet	14	10 Used for Decoy/ Radio Relay
	SP21+ Neptune	2	
		16	
Transports	C130	7	
	Boeing 707	2	Also used for Recce
	Electras	3	
	Fokker F28	9	6 from State Airline
	Fokker F27	12	All from State Airline
		33	
CAS	Pucara	25	Located on Falklands
	Macchi 339	5	Located on Falklands
	T34	4	Located on Falklands
		34	
Helicopters	Bell 212	2	
	Alouettes	7	
	Lynx	2	
	Sea King	4	
	Chinook	2	On Falklands
	Puma	8	5 on Falklands
	Augusta 109	3	On Falklands
	Bell UH1H	9	On Falklands
	Misc	11	
		48	

Source: Ethell, Jeffrey and Price, Alfred. Air War South Atlantic. MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1983.

APPENDIX E

Argentine Aircraft Losses

Lost to Enemy Action:

Type	Number	Remarks
Daggers	11	9 Sidewinders; 2 SAM
Skyhawks	18	6 Sidewinders; 8 SAM; 4 other
Canberras	2	1 Sidewinder; 1 SAM (Sea Dart)
Lear Jet	1	SAM (Sea Dart)
C130	1	Sidewinder/30mm Cannon
Mirage IIIs	2	Sidewinders
Pucaras	11	6 lost in Special Forces attack
Augusta 109	1	Sea Harrier 30mm cannon
Alouette	1	Lost with General Belgrano
Macchi 339	1	SAM (Blowpipe)
T34 Mentor	4	Destroyed - Special Forces attack
Skyvans	1	Destroyed - Special Forces attack
Puma	8	5 to Harrier ground attack
Chinooks	1	Harrier ground attack
Islander	1	Harrier ground attack
	64	

*

Does not include 32 aircraft captured in various states of repair on the Falklands after Argentine surrender.

Lost For Other Reasons:

Type	Number	Remarks
Skyhawk	4	2 accident; 2 to Argentine AAA
Pucara	1	Operational accident
Macchi 339	1	Operational accident
	6	

Totals 70

By Type		By Cause	
Dagger	11	Harriers	
Skyhawk	22	in the air	23
Mirage	2	on the ground	9
Canberra	2	Surface SAMs/Guns	20
Pucara	12	Special Forces attack	11
Puma	8	Lost with ship	1
T34	4	Operational accident	4
Other	9	Downed by friendly fire	2
	70		70

Source: Ethell and Price; Air War South Atlantic, (see Bibliography)

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GLOSSARY

AAA	Antiaircraft Artillery
AEW	Airborne Early Warning
AOA	Amphibious Operations Area
AOB	Air Order of Battle
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
BAS	British Antarctic Survey
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
FAA	Fuerza Aerea Argentina (Argentine Air Force)
FOB	Forward Operating Base
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
INS	Inertial Navigation System
MEZ	Maritime Exclusion Zone
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PM	Prime Minster
RAF	Royal Air Force
RN	Royal Navy
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SAR	Search and Rescue
STUFT	Ships Taken Up From Trade
TEZ	Total Exclusion Zone
TF	Task Force

UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations